

## HOUSE RESOLUTION 424

By Dean

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Clyde L. Willhoit of Chattanooga.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Clyde L. Willhoit of Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Willhoit was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willhoit served with acumen and alacrity as Chief of Police for the City of Chattanooga for many years, in which position he earned the respect of the officers and employees of the Chattanooga Police Department and the citizens of Chattanooga for the exemplary quality of his leadership; and

WHEREAS, born on June 25, 1922, in Bradley County, Tennessee, Clyde L. Willhoit relocated with his family to Chattanooga at a young age and attended Ridge Elementary School, Brainerd Junior High, Central High School, and Cleveland State College; and

WHEREAS, on October 7, 1942, Mr. Willhoit volunteered with the U.S. Army Air Corps and served with the legendary 449<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group known as the "Flying Horsemen" during World War II, flying forty-five missions as a radioman; and

WHEREAS, based in Italy, the 449<sup>th</sup> flew missions over Northern Italy, Southern France, and Southern Germany, concentrating on Nazi supply and transportation capabilities; the group's successful missions are credited with shortening the war in Europe. For his courageous service, Mr. Willhoit received several citations and medals, including the Air Medal with three Oak Clusters and the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Mr. Willhoit continued his military service as a member of the Army Reserve and saw active duty again during the Vietnam War as a survivor's assistant before retiring at the rank of Colonel after thirty-three years of service; and

WHEREAS, on November 10, 1945, Clyde Willhoit married his beloved wife, Mary Ruth Smith, who was a nurse at Baroness Erlanger Hospital, where she had served during World War II, associated with the Army WAC; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Willhoit went to work for the U.S. Post Office the day after he returned from World War II and later joined the Tennessee Highway Patrol before being sworn in as a patrolman with the Chattanooga Police Department on August 10, 1948; and

WHEREAS, an exemplary officer of the law, Clyde Willhoit worked his way up the ranks to become Chief of Police in 1976, retiring in 1979 with thirty-three years of law enforcement service; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated professional, Chief Willhoit earned an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice at Cleveland State Community College; he was a Certified Senior Radio Engineer, who proved himself instrumental to moving the Chattanooga Police Department from the VHF to UHF radios in the 1970s, which allowed officers to carry radios with them away from their squad cars; and

WHEREAS, upon his retirement from the CPD, Chief Willhoit was asked by the then Tennessee Commissioner of Safety Gene Roberts to join him in Nashville as the Deputy Commissioner of Safety during the administration of Governor Lamar Alexander; and

WHEREAS, returning to Chattanooga to enjoy his much deserved retirement, Clyde Willhoit was once again called to service by then Chattanooga Mayor Gene Roberts to serve as the City Court Clerk for a time during an important period of court growth and transition; and

WHEREAS, an active member of his community, Mr. Willhoit was a member of the Alhambra Shrine Temple, the Missionary Ridge Chapter Order of the Eastern Star, the Chattanooga Half-Century Club, and the Ridgedale Masonic Lodge, where he was a 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree York Rite Mason; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willhoit was an active and devout member of the Brainerd Baptist Church, which he served faithfully for many years as a member of several committees and the Dixon Sunday School Class; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Willhoit was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Willhoit enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife, Mary Ruth Smith Willhoit, for sixty-two years, until her death on November 4, 2007, and was the proud father of four devoted children, grandfather of ten grandchildren, and great-grandfather of twelve great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his parents, Aner P. and Ruby D. Willhoit, and his wife, Mary Ruth Smith Willhoit, Clyde L. Willhoit is survived by his four children and their spouses, Ruby and George Roettger, C.L. and Gayle Willhoit, Mary Alice and Phil Neal, and Clarence W. Willhoit; his two brothers and their spouses, Rhoten and Jimmie Willhoit and Roy A. and Louise Willhoit; ten grandchildren and their spouses, Joel and Stacy Roettger, Mark and Cristin Roettger, Allen and Melanie Huggins, Kandy Huggins and Chip Griffin, Laurel and Gary Abernathy, Richard Armstrong, Maggie and Esteban Minsk, Josh Armstrong, Jenni and Dustin Reeve, and Jeremy Roettger; and

WHEREAS, he is also survived by his twelve great-grandchildren: Noah Roettger, Ella Roettger, Claire Roettger, Tristan Huggins, Bodie Huggins, Piper Huggins, Christian Richards, Brooklyn Abernathy, Emma Minsk, Seth Minsk, Ethan Armstrong, Sydney Reeve, Logan Reeve, Lawson Reeve, and Paige Armstrong; and

WHEREAS, Clyde Willhoit leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of Clyde L. Willhoit, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Willhoit.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.